

A New Story About Lincoln



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Engr.*

Abraham Lincoln

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HOW HE PARDONED A FRIEND OF HIS BOYHOOD

SENATOR Mills has a story about Lincoln. It was told to him by a son of John L. Helm of Kentucky, who lives in Corsicana.

“Old John L. Helm,” said the Senator, “was a famous character in Kentucky. He was, if I remember rightly, a Governor of the State. When the civil war came on Helm was a rabid secessionist. He could not praise the South too highly, and could not heap enough abuse upon the North. He was too old to go into the war with his sons, and remained at home, doing all he could to help the Confederate cause and harass the Yankees who invaded the State. Finally he became so obstreperous that the Federal General who was in command near Helm’s home put him in prison. The old man’s age, the high position which he occupied in the State, his wide connection, and especially his inability to do any actual harm, were all pleaded in his extenuation and he was released. Instead of profiting by the warning the old man became more persistent than ever in his course. Once more he was clapped into jail. This happened two or three times, and finally, while he was still locked up, the matter was brought to the attention of the federal authorities. Even President Lincoln was appealed to and asked to commit the ardent Southerner to an indefinite confinement in order that he might be curbed.

“Lincoln listened to the statement of the case with more than usual interest. Then he leaned back

and began to speak with a smile upon his face. 'You are talking about John L. Helm? Well, did you know that I used to live, when I was a boy, in Helm's town. He was kind to me. He seemed to like me as a boy and he never lost an opportunity to help me. He seemed to think,' said Lincoln, with another of his almost pathetic smiles, 'that I would probably make something of a man. Why, when I went out to Illinois, poor and unknown, that man gave me the money to pay my way and keep me until I got a start. John L. Helm? O, yes, I know him. And I know what I owe to him—I think I can fix his case.'

" 'And then,' said Senator Mills, 'Lincoln went to a desk and wrote a few words. The bit of writing is treasured in the Helm household to this day. This is what the President wrote.'

" 'I hereby pardon John L. Helm of Kentucky for all that he has ever done against the United States and all that he ever will do.

“ 'ABRAHAM LINCOLN.' ”

THE FOLLOWING WAS TOLD BY GENERAL SICKLES AT THE BANQUET OF THE LOYAL LEGION IN WASHINGTON

IT WAS on the fifth day of July, 1863, that I was brought to Washington on a stretcher from the field of Gettysburg. Hearing of my arrival President Lincoln came to my room and sat down by my bedside. He asked about the great battle, and when I told

him of the terrible slaughter the tears streamed from his eyes. I asked him if he doubted the result. He said 'No.' Then he continued.

'This may seem strange to you, but a few days ago, when the opposing armies were converging, I felt as never before my utter helplessness in the great crisis that was to come upon the country. I went into my own room and locked the door. Then I knelt down and prayed as I had never prayed before. I told God that He had called me to this position, that I had done all that I could do, and the result now was in his hands; that I felt my own weakness and lack of power, and that I knew that if the country was to be saved it was because He so willed it. When I went down from my room I felt that there could be no doubt of the issue. The burden seemed to have rolled off my shoulders, my intense anxiety was relieved, and in its place came a great sense of trustfulness, and that was why I did not doubt the result at Gettysburg. And what is more, "Sickles,"' he continued, 'I believe that we may hear at any moment of a great success by Grant, who has been pegging away at Vicksburg for so many months. By tomorrow you will hear that he has won a victory as important to us in the west as Gettysburg is in the east.'

"Then, turning to me," he said. 'Sickles, I am in a prophetic mood today, and I know that you will get well.'

"The doctors do not give me that hope, Mr. President," I said, but he answered cheerfully, 'I know you will get well, "Sickles."'

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